Oregon Crusaders Percussion Audition Packet
Front Ensemble

Written and Compiled by the 2015 Oregon Crusaders and OC Indoor Percussion Staff
Introduction

Welcome to the Oregon Crusaders Percussion Program (OCP). We are extremely pleased that you have chosen us for what we hope will be a positive, rewarding, and life changing experience. In the following pages you will learn about our philosophy and techniques – please read each item carefully and thoroughly. Our staff is one of the most experienced and knowledgeable in the activity. By working diligently through the packet using the mindset and guidelines described, you will have a very good chance of success. Whether you ultimately end up as a member of the Oregon Crusaders Drum and Bugle Corps or OC Indoor, these concepts will be a valuable tool wherever your life travels take you. Best of luck and remember – luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.

How To Use This Packet

Read and re-read the information about what we value here at the OCP. Highlight important concepts that stand out to you. Go back to them often as you practice as well as throughout the season. Sometimes it is easy to lose your way on your journey to achieve greatness. This packet is here to help you and will be a great reference outside of rehearsal. Use it to reinforce what you learn from the staff. KNOWLEDGE IS POWER! The more you understand about your gig, the better your practice sessions, rehearsals, and performances will be. The most important thing we can convey to you is this:

There are no shortcuts.

Work hard all the time. Always be prepared. Have structured guided practice sessions with a metronome and digital recordings. Study the score often and pay attention to the details that are on the page. Remember that written music is a set of physical instructions for you to execute. Use technology to receive feedback from yourself, your peers, and your staff. Communicate often outside of the live rehearsal. Use REPETITON of rhythms, rudiments, and musical passages at tempo once you have worked through them slowly with a mind to all of the markings on the page. This will build consistency, quality, and good muscle memory. If you break or are having difficulty, go back to that point and attack the problem slowly. Most likely it is what happened right before the problem occurred that was actually the problem.

NEVER play without a purpose or without thinking before you begin. Visualize what you are about to do and what you want to accomplish, internalize the tempo, subdivide, relax your body and mind, and BE GREAT!

Every rep, every day, all the time.
The Things We Value

- **Character Both on and off the Field/Floor** – upon being accepted into the Oregon Crusaders you are an ambassador for the organization and should conduct yourself accordingly. The things you do and the decisions you make affect the team.

- **Consistency and Quality** – being able to play in time as perfectly as possible ALL THE TIME with the best possible Quality of Sound is a key factor in what we try to accomplish. Consistency and confidence comes only from long hours spent breaking rhythms down with a metronome until they are as second nature to you as breathing air. Quality of Sound is achieved when the performer does not slow the implement down on its way to the instrument. Allowing the implement to move quickly to and complete full contact with the playing surface at all heights while maintaining a relaxed but firm grip (in consideration of the tempo, note value, and rebound characteristics of the instrument in question) will allow you to achieve this. When all of our performers possess the confidence built upon *knowledge and understanding* of the material and technique, then rehearsals can be spent on high level concepts rather than simply trying to develop skills.

- **Efficiency** – wasted time and energy while playing your instrument as well as how you personally operate while with the group decreases the opportunity for success. Time is money! Moving quickly in a straight line path from A-B with no impediments and a sense of urgency ensures the maximum amount of cleaning/repetition. This is a key element to any successful group. Think about how you can get the greatest results in the least amount of time.

- **Equipment Maintenance and Care** – we have thousands of dollars of equipment that is transported on our trailers and loaded many times in and out of schools and other facilities. This equipment is the method by which we bring our unique voice to the world. Please keep them clean and well maintained, do not abuse them in any way, and load and unload them in accordance with the instructions of your staff. Instruments and equipment are NEVER to be taken home without express written agreement of the Director.

- **Financial Commitment** – financial preparation and planning is just as important as what you do on the field/floor. Plan your life so that you can pay your fees in full and on time.

- **Leading By Example** – be everything you want the group to be. Ask yourself the question: “if everyone was doing what I was doing, would the group be the best it possibly can be?” The best leaders are the ones that can practice what they preach. And don’t have to preach – because they can speak with their actions.

- **Musicianship and Ensemble Awareness** – remember that this is not an individual activity. While every member of the group is working hard to perfect their individual
skill sets at home, during rehearsals it is our number one priority to play together as an ensemble. Using your senses and expanding your awareness of those around you and your role within the group is something that can only be developed over time. Never be rigid or inflexible as we learn the show and the unique situations the visual aspect creates for the music. Listening to feedback and instructions from the box is crucial to this process. What sounds correct to you on the floor may not be correct from the vantage point of the audience member. This is ultimately where the music must sound together from. Your ability to adjust quickly and having the technical facility to play a passage any way the staff asks you to is a huge asset to the team.

- **Percussive Skills and Vocabulary** – as a musician and member of the Oregon Crusaders, you should always be working to maximize and improve your knowledge and skills. The more tools you have at your disposal, the more the group will be able to achieve. Listen to your staff of experts and strive to be able to play EVERYTHING in the packet. If we can achieve it, it’s IN! Everyone loves incredible technical passages played with great clarity.

- **Perseverance. Willpower. Never Giving Up.** – this activity will push you to the limits in every way. How you deal with that will dictate your character. Trust is established with your teammates by always being there and working your hardest for yourself and for them. Be strong. Give maximum effort at all times.

- **Physical Fitness** – this activity is a sport. In order for you to excel and withstand the rigors of long, physically and mentally exhausting rehearsals, physical fitness is a MUST. You are doing a disservice to yourself and the group if you are unable to function and perform at the highest level during rehearsals. Also, being fit decreases the chance for injury which can be devastating to the group.

- **Preparation** - practicing with a plan and perfecting your materials at home is crucial to our success. Strong individual knowledge and understanding of the material in all aspects increases our ability to rehearse in a productive fashion. If you are in an ensemble setting and haven’t ironed out your deficiencies or you are struggling with a particular skill or passage, then it is very difficult for the group to make progress. This decreases the positive experience for yourself and the rest of the team. Spend the MOST time on the things you are the least skilled at. Turn your WEAKNESSES into STRENGTHS. Always work towards mastery and never just play mindlessly. Don’t just try to get it right – keep at it until you can’t get it wrong. Managing your time so that you excel at all of your activities outside of the group will increase your ability to participate fully with a lower stress level and high level of confidence. DON’T PROCRASTINATE! Make a schedule, set goals, stick to the plan, and most importantly - follow through.

- **Punctuality** – to be early is to be on time. If we have a scheduled downbeat then it is your responsibility to plan ahead in order to arrive and assist in any unloading and moving of equipment, or other pre-rehearsal prep at a facility. This is designed to insure
that the group can maximize its rehearsal time. Being late or in a stressful or frantic state is never desirable for you or anyone else on the team. A good rule is to arrive a minimum of 30 minutes prior to the downbeat of any rehearsal. After rehearsal concludes, staying until cleaning and loading duties are complete is also a requirement. Never leave until you are dismissed or have been cleared by a staff member.

- **Rehearsal Etiquette** – again, be early to be on time. Have your equipment and personal gear set up and ready to go well before downbeat. We have a process, and the quickest path to success is following it. At rehearsals resist the urge to “teach” others. This is what we have assembled an expert staff for. When the rep is complete, let the staff speak first and give you valuable feedback to make you better. If you have a question, simply raise your hand and ask it in a respectful and positive manner. Being on the same page is key to our success. 8 snares thinking the same thing will get cleaner faster. It’s that simple. Always be a part of the solution and never a part of the problem. We are all part of the same team striving for the same goal – to be the best we possibly can be.

- **Team Oriented Mindset** – we all live and work together towards a common goal for a long period of time. Be respectful of your teammates and always work with a sense of making the team better any way you can. This includes helping others and doing the MOST you can at all times both on and off the field/floor. Understand that when you don’t pull your weight, it doesn’t just affect you – it affects every member of the team.

- **Battery Visual Proficiency** – everything we play and perform is accompanied by some type of visual element by the Battery, whether it is marching or choreography. The faster you become great at this, the faster we will be able to achieve a high level as a group. You must also work to master these responsibilities at home. Make them part of your daily routine.

- **Work Ethic** – by deciding to join the Oregon Crusaders, you have made a decision to embrace a way of life. You need to work as hard as you can to make yourself the very best in all of these areas. Be a well oiled machine both musically and physically.

**“Can you imagine what I would do if I could do all I can?”**

- Sun Tzu
Front Ensemble Technique & Approach

The key words for the Oregon Crusaders Front Ensemble approach are simple - "no tension". Every technique and skill we ask of our players is made with those words in mind. Here is a checklist that will help you to incorporate these words into your playing:

- Begin by standing at an appropriate distance from the instrument, such that your elbows are only slightly in front of your upper body, if not in line with it.
- The instrument should be at an appropriate height for the individual player, such that the player's forearm is at a slightly downward angle.
- Body posture should be upright and confident, avoid slouching.
- Feet should attempt to remain shoulder width apart at all times.
- Breathing is important! This will be an important tactic in helping you play relaxed and without tension.
- Focus on playing relaxed at faster tempos. Playing with tension will only hinder your playing ability.

Stroke Types

**Piston Stroke:** Begin with both mallets at the desired playing height (for exercises, typically forte). Strike the mallet down to the bar, with the "up" stroke at the same speed as the "down" stroke. The mallet should return to the original height. If the proceeding dynamic is different, the mallet should return up to the next playing height. If the proceeding note is different, the mallet should take a diagonal path to the "up" position above the next note. Playing with weight is the key to this stroke, and will help with natural rebound instead up having to pull or force the mallet back upward. Tension will only make this stroke type more difficult.

**Legato Stroke:** Also known as the "float" stroke, the legato stroke begins with the same stroke type as the piston stroke. Begin by striking the mallet down to the bar with weight. Different from piston stroke, the "up" stroke should take up the full amount of space until the next note, moving at a consistent speed. This movement should be created using mostly the wrist, with very little from the arm.

2 Mallet Technique

Here at the Oregon Crusaders, we use a slightly modified version of the back-fulcrum technique. Begin by wrapping the pinky, ring, and middle fingers around the mallet, with approximately 2 inches of extra mallet shaft out the back of the pinky. These three fingers will be the main fulcrum point, with the grip only being tight enough to keep the mallet in place - no tension! Next, wrap the pointer finger around the mallet, with the top crook on the mallet. There should be an open space between the middle and pointer fingers. Last, place the thumb
pad flat on the mallet, in the same spot on the shaft as the pointer finger. Unlike traditional back-fulcrum technique, we will be utilizing the pointer finger and thumb fulcrum for passages where speed is necessary. 90% of the mallet movement should come from wrist turn, and very little from finger movement and/or arm movement. When playing on two adjacent notes, the mallets should create an equilateral triangle, with the back of the hand at a 45 degree angle to the instrument (American grip).

4 Mallet Technique

In order to produce a unified technique, all keyboard players will use Stevens Grip for 4-mallet playing. Begin by wrapping the pinky and ring finger around one mallet, with about 1/2 an inch out the back of the pinky. The mallet should rest near the top of the bottom third of your middle finger, not back in the webbing. This is the stationary outer mallet that does not move. For the inner mallet, place the butt-end of another mallet perpendicular to the palm, where the thumb muscle creases in your palm (usually the center of your palm). Place the tip of the middle finger near the butt end of the mallet, with little or no pressure applied. Much like the 2-mallet technique, a fulcrum should be created using the pointer finger and thumb, with the thumb pad flat on the mallet and on the top crook of the pointer finger. Most important to note is that the hand should be in a hand-shake position, with the thumbnail facing the sky. All fingers should be in a relaxed position - no white knuckling!

From left to right, mallets are numbered 1, 2, 3, & 4. Just like in the two mallet technique, all mallets should return to an "up" position.

There are 3 main stroke types for the Stevens Grip:

Double Vertical: Both mallets in one hand strike the keyboard at the same time. This is created by a handshake-like wrist turn, with the thumb remaining towards sky throughout the stroke.

Single Independent/ Single Alternating: One mallet moving independently from another, or alternating between mallets. This motion is created using rotation - not vertical wrist motion. The mallet that is not in motion is used as a focal point, in which the mallet in motion rotates around that mallet. The alternating motion is for slower tempos, in which each mallet has time to return to the top before the other begins its motion. There is no finger motion involved.

Double Lateral: Using both mallets in a hand with one stroke. This stroke is for faster tempos, in which both mallets strike the bars in succession at equal volumes. After the stroke, both mallets return to the up position.
The Exercises

The attached exercises are the main bulk of material we will draw from for the 2015 season. You are expected to learn and be able to play all of the exercises in the packet. The individuals that can perform the most material at the highest possible level will be given the greatest consideration for a spot within the ensemble.

We expect that you are here to MAX THIS OUT. Mastering as many skills as possible will make you a better player, as well as give the writers a wellspring of techniques to draw from in the design process.

Do the work. Practice each exercise slowly with a metronome until it is mastered. Bump it up a few clicks, rinse and repeat. Do not increase the tempo until you are confident that you have the material down cold at each tempo, and have gotten some reps to build quality muscle memory.

Muscle Groups and Tempo

Use the proper muscles and parts of the hand for each tempo. Using the wrong muscle groups for the tempo in question will hinder your efficiency and hold back your progress. If you are uncertain about what part of your hand and how much arm to incorporate for the tempo, your instructor will be able to make this clear for you at rehearsals. It is then your job to reinforce this diligently at home and in the practice room.

Don’t use a bulldozer to move a marble!

Generally speaking, larger motions require larger muscles. Shorter, quicker motions require smaller muscles and less distance. Always remember it is your goal to manipulate the stick or mallet with the least amount of effort and greatest result possible (quality of sound). Never impede the path of the implement to its destination by being tense or slowing the motion down.

The Audition

We will work through this audition material and break down concepts at the audition camps. You will be given a sheet that will outline what our criteria are and we will listen to everyone individually. Again – you are expected to be able to play everything in this packet. That is always the goal. It is not meant to scare you. Everything we do at OC is designed to take you and the group to the next level. We are looking for solid fundamentals as well as mastery and control of advanced skills. Fast, sloppy and out of control should never be part of your game. We look forward to working with each of you. Now – GO PRACTICE!
7/8 Octaves

Marimba

Bass Guitar

Kit/Aux

If no kit/aux part is written, play an appropriate groove or find a suitable exercise from the snare packet that will fit. Auxiliary players are required to work through the snare packet.

Green 1

Mar.

B. Guit.

Kit/Aux

RL RLR RLR RLR RLR RLR RLR RLR RLR RLR

Green 2

Mar.

B. Guit.

Kit/Aux

RL LRL LRL LRL LRL LRL LRL LRL LRL LRL